



EPA Region 5 Records Ctr.



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Future meeting

EPA is tentatively planning a public meeting in September to talk about the ACS cleanup. EPA will publicize the time and place with more mailings like this one and newspaper advertisements. Please contact EPA if you know someone who would like to get on the mailing list.

Cleanup Work Could Finish a Year Ahead of Schedule

American Chemical Service Site
Griffith, Indiana

August 2004

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency officials say the final cleanup phase at the American Chemical Service Inc. Superfund site could be finished as much as a year ahead of schedule. The final cleanup that began in early 2001 was expected to be done in mid-2005. Now it appears construction work may be done this September.

The group of companies responsible for pollution at the site has completed installation of the soil vapor extraction systems (*see box, back page*) and is operating them full-time. Combined, the vapor extraction systems have been removing 1,100 pounds of volatile organic chemical compounds from the ground every day. Nearly all are destroyed by the thermal treatment device attached to the extraction system. The exhaust gases are then released into the atmosphere in accordance with a permit from the state of Indiana.

The water treatment plant also continues to receive pumped ground water for processing. Ground water is the technical term for underground supplies of fresh water.

Recycled chemicals polluted ground water

American Chemical recycled chemicals from 1958 to 1975 when it voluntarily stopped using two disposal areas on the property and covered them. EPA determined high levels of volatile organic compounds such as benzene, toluene and vinyl chloride contaminated the ground water underneath the plant.

EPA decided a ground-water "pump-and-treat" system was the best way to clean up the pollution. The Agency also ordered buried drums to be removed from the site.

From time to time EPA has done routine maintenance and repair on plant equipment (lightning struck the water treatment plant in 2003). These and other situations temporarily shut down the plant. After the repairs or service, the plant was slowly brought back online. At no time was any untreated ground water released from the treatment plant.

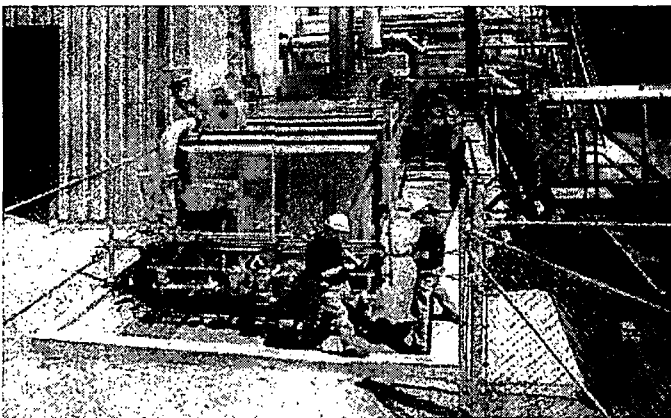
The separate page enclosed with this fact sheet shows how the site looks now as the cleanup project nears the end.

American Chemical Service Site SVE Systems Explained

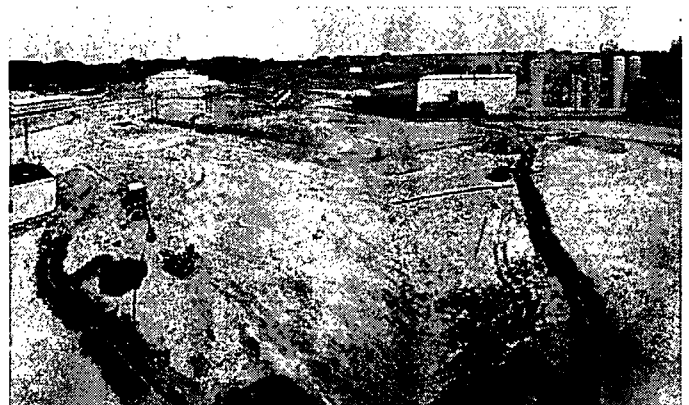
The soil vapor extraction systems consist of a network of wells placed into the contaminated areas of the site to remove volatile organic compounds (commonly called VOCs) from the soil and debris above the water table.

The VOCs are removed by a vacuum, which draws the air and VOC-vapors out of the ground. The VOCs are then routed to a special incinerator called a thermal oxidizer to destroy them, at temperatures of 1,750 degrees F. The high temperature converts the VOCs to water vapor, carbon dioxide and mineral acid, which is neutralized before release.

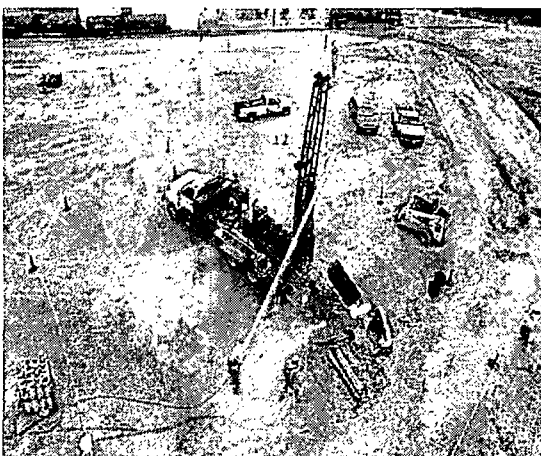
The waste gases are then discharged into the atmosphere. Testing shows the thermal oxidizer destroys more than 99.9 percent of the VOCs entering the unit. That meets the 3-pounds-per-hour VOC discharge limit set by Indiana Department of Environmental Management.



Two engineers make adjustments to a thermal oxidizer unit. The oxidizer breaks down chemical compounds with high heat and then vents the harmless remnants into the air.



A trench is dug in preparation for laying pipe for the soil vapor extraction system in this fall 2002 photograph. This area is now covered by a foot of gravel.



A drilling crew is installing a 25-foot pipe in one of the 52 wells built for the vapor extraction system. Vapors from each well are piped to the thermal oxidizer.



This construction worker appears to be walking on water, but that's just the plastic liner installed over 6.5 acres of the site. The worker is cutting a hole in the liner for one of the vapor extraction wells.